

(19)



Europäisches Patentamt

European Patent Office

Office européen des brevets



(11)

EP 0 669 142 B1

(12)

EUROPEAN PATENT SPECIFICATION

(45) Date of publication and mention
of the grant of the patent:

13.09.2000 Bulletin 2000/37

(51) Int. Cl.⁷: **A61M 25/00**

(21) Application number: **95100765.7**

(22) Date of filing: **20.01.1995**

(54) **Catheter having coextruded tubing**

Katheter mit koextrudiertem Schlauch

Cathéter à tubulure coextrudée

(84) Designated Contracting States:
DE FR GB IT NL

(30) Priority: **31.01.1994 US 189209**

(43) Date of publication of application:
30.08.1995 Bulletin 1995/35

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WO-A-90/01345 **FR-A- 2 530 958**
US-A- 5 125 913 **US-A- 5 195 969**
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EP 0 669 142 B1

Description

[0001] Intravascular catheters, such as catheters for advancement into the arterial system around the heart, are presently in wide clinical use both for angiography and angioplasty (PTCA). As is well known, the catheter must be made of a flexible material which, nevertheless, exhibits a certain stiffness so that the catheter may be advanced through the various twists and turns of the arterial system to bring an angioplasty balloon or other clot opening device, for example, to the desired site of arterial occlusion. Also, while the plastic body of the catheter must exhibit this desired stiffness and other particular characteristics, the catheter lumen must have a low friction surface so that the catheter can be advanced along a guidewire, and also a guidewire or inner catheter can be advanced through the catheter lumen.

[0002] Conventionally, a catheter having a nylon body or a body of polyethylene, polyurethane, poly(ethylene terephthalate) (known as PET) is used, with the catheter lumen having a lubricating coating or containing a preformed polytetrafluoroethylene (PTFE) sleeve. This inner PTFE sleeve provides the desired low friction to the catheter lumen, while the balance of the catheter can provide other desired qualities. However, it has sometimes been found that the presence of the PTFE tubing can make the catheter too stiff, as well as unduly subject to kinking, when the catheter turns a sharp corner in the arterial system of the patient in which it is used.

[0003] PTFE is of course a stiff plastic, and this has to be accommodated for by reducing the thickness of the outer catheter layer by an amount that may cause other characteristics of the catheter to be less than optimum. Also, the PTFE of course does not bond in any significant way to the nylon or PET outer catheter layer. This provides an added possible disadvantage that the PTFE tubing may shift with respect to the outer catheter layer and slide out of the lumen to a certain extent. As is well known, PTFE bonds only with great difficulty to most other plastic materials.

[0004] If it were desired to replace the inner PTFE tubing in conventional catheters with another low friction plastic such as a high density polyethylene, this material also is incompatible with nylon, for example, and does not form a significant bond with nylon upon coextrusion of tubing with a nylon outer layer and a high density polyethylene inner layer. Such layers also can slip in their relative position because of the essential absence of a bond, even after coextrusion.

[0005] As another prior art expedient, the interior of a catheter is coated with a friction reducing material such as a silicone in liquid form, which is then dried. Such processes are particularly difficult with small diameter intravascular catheters. Also, silicone resins and the like which are used for such coating lack the best low friction characteristics to facilitate advance-

ment of such catheters along a guidewire.

[0006] FR-A-2530958 discloses a catheter made of two or more coextruded layers, the outermost layer being very flexible and the innermost wall having a predetermined rigidity.

[0007] US-A-5125913 discloses a double layer medical catheter with an integral soft tip which is made by the coextrusion of a relatively rigid inner layer and a relatively soft outer layer, said inner layer being interrupted.

[0008] WO 90/01345 is directed to an intravascular catheter comprising a tabular body formed with inner and outer polymer layers with a reinforcing braid layer formed between them, said inner and outer layers including a blend of nylon and a copolymer of ester linked polyethylene and polyamide.

[0009] EP-A 0 650 740, which represents a document according to Art. 54 (3) EPC, discloses an intravascular catheter, which comprises a coextruded length of flexible plastic tubing, said tubing comprising an outer plastic layer and an inner plastic layer defining a catheter lumen having a wall surface, wherein said inner and outer plastic layers are bonded to each other and are made of different materials the wall surface of the catheter lumen exhibiting a lower friction coefficient than the material of said outer plastic layer and the material of the outer plastic layer having greater stiffness than the material of the inner plastic layer. In accordance with the present invention an intravascular catheter is provided, which comprises a coextruded length of flexible plastic tubing (20; 40), said tubing comprising an outer plastic layer (32; 42) and an inner plastic layer (34; 44) defining a catheter lumen (28; 46) having a wall surface, wherein said inner and outer plastic layers (32, 34; 42, 44) are bonded to each other and are made of different materials, the wall surface of the catheter lumen (28; 46) exhibiting a lower friction coefficient than the material of said outer plastic layer (32; 42) and the material of the outer plastic layer (32; 42) having greater stiffness than the material of the inner plastic layer (34; 44), wherein in at least a portion of said catheter said outer plastic layer (42) defines a second lumen (48) spaced from said inner plastic layer (44).

[0010] Furthermore, there is provided a method which comprises coextruding a length of flexible plastic tubing (20; 40) by bringing a first tubular, molten plastic layer (32; 42) into contact with a second tubular, molten plastic layer (34; 44) to form a unitary, multilayer plastic tubing (20; 40) whereby bonding takes place between said plastic layers during the coextrusion process, wherein in the resulting co-extruded product the material of the inner plastic layer (34; 44) defines a lumen (28; 46) having a wall surface and exhibits a lower friction coefficient than the material of the outer plastic layer (32; 42) and the material of the outer plastic layer (32; 42) has greater stiffness than the material of the inner plastic layer (34; 44), wherein said tubing (20, 40) is formed to have a second lumen (48) defined by said

outer plastic layer (42) and spaced from said inner plastic layer (44) in at least a portion of said tubing (20, 40).

[0011] According to the present invention, the plastic material of the inner plastic layer defines a catheter lumen having the walls which exhibit lower frictional characteristics than the material of the outer plastic layer. Thus, the selection of the desired outer plastic layer materials for the catheter may be greatly broadened to optimize catheter performance. For instance, a material may be selected which bonds optimally to the desired balloon material of catheters which carry such balloons for good bonding, while the lumen of the catheter provides desired lumen characteristics, particularly low friction for a guidewire or a catheter advancing through the lumen.

[0012] Also in accordance with the present invention the material of the outer plastic layer has a greater stiffness than the material of the inner plastic layer, to provide a catheter which is flexible, but stiff enough for optimal "pushability" for advancement thereof, particularly into the arterial system of a patient adjacent the heart. For example, nylon, polyurethane, or PET may be used as the outer plastic layer material.

[0013] Preferably, a chemical bond is used between the outer and inner plastic layers in the catheter tubing.

[0014] The material of the inner plastic layer typically comprises a vinylic polymer having functional groups bonded to the material of the outer plastic layer. The vinylic polymer may be a copolymer having a major amount of ethylene units and a minor amount of units of unsaturated carboxylic acid or an anhydride thereof. Typically, known resins manufactured and sold by the Quantum Chemical Company under the trademark Plexar® may be used for the inner plastic layer. These materials are vinylic (for example polyethylene of varying densities, polypropylene, or poly(ethylene vinyl acetate) which are copolymerized with a small amount of maleic acid. These materials have been used chiefly as "tie layers" for multilayer plastic sheeting, the Plexar® material being an inner layer which bonds together dissimilar outer plastic layers. Other unsaturated carboxylic acids such as fumaric acid, cinnamic acid, crotonic acid, linoleic acid, or the like may also be used as a substitute for maleic acid.

[0015] In accordance with this invention, a plastic material similar to Plexar® or the like may be used as typically the inner layer of a multiple layer catheter tubing, taking advantage of the good chemical bonding power of the Plexar® or other similar plastic, preferably without using the functional plastic material to bond two dissimilar layers together, but making use of the material in its own right for its desired characteristics. For example, high density polyethylenes which have been copolymerized with a minor amount of functional groups such as an unsaturated carboxylic acid or an anhydride thereof may be used to provide a firm bond with an outer layer of nylon, PET, or polyurethane for example, while providing a low friction surface to the catheter

lumen.

[0016] Specifically, the inner plastic layer may comprise a vinylic polymer which comprises from one to five mole percent of maleic anhydride polymer units, copolymerized preferably with ethylene to provide a high density polyethylene having low friction characteristics.

[0017] The flexible plastic tubing of this invention is easily coextruded, to provide a catheter tubing which requires no separate PTFE or other low friction sleeve, or coating for a reduction in overall cost of manufacture of the catheter tubing used in this invention.

[0018] The catheter tubing used in this invention may be simply coextruded as a multiple tubular layer catheter, with the reactive polymer used in this invention being typically the innermost layer, with that innermost layer becoming chemically bonded during the coextrusion to an outer plastic layer which is made of a different material. Thus, normally incompatible plastic materials may be bonded together in the catheter tubing used in this invention to provide both a firm bond and the desired characteristics of the respective materials selected.

[0019] For example, nylon and high density polyethylene are normally quite sealingly incompatible with each other. By this invention, a high density polyethylene copolymer serving as an inner catheter tubing layer may be firmly, covalently bonded to a nylon outer catheter layer, so that the nylon can provide desired stiffness to the catheter while still permitting flexibility, and the high density polyethylene inner layer can provide low friction to a guidewire or inner catheter. The chemical bonding between the two catheter layers can take place during the extrusion process, or, if desired, subsequent heat treating or the like may be provided.

DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

[0020]

Fig. 1 is a perspective view of a PTCA balloon catheter not in accordance with this invention kept for elucidation purposes.

Fig. 2 is an enlarged sectional view taken along line 2-2 of Fig. 1;

Fig. 3 is a schematic view of the extrusion of catheter tubing not in accordance with this invention which has been kept for elucidation purposes.

Fig. 4 is a longitudinal sectional view of another embodiment of a PTCA balloon catheter in accordance with this invention; and

Fig. 5 is an enlarged transverse sectional view taken along line 5-5 of Fig. 4.

DESCRIPTION OF SPECIFIC EMBODIMENTS

[0021] Referring to Figs. 1-3, an angioplasty catheter 10, not in accordance with the present invention is disclosed, which may be of conventional design and use for PTCA procedures except as otherwise indicated herein.

[0022] Catheter 10 defines a proximal end having a conventional hub 12.

[0023] Catheter 10 comprises an outer tubular body 14 which connects with the Y-connector at the proximal end 15, and also connects with a balloon 16 at its distal end 18. Outer catheter tube 14 terminates at its point of connection 18 with the proximal end of balloon 16.

[0024] Also, catheter 10 comprises an inner catheter tubing 20 which extends through the lumen of outer catheter tubing 14, defining a generally cylindrical space 22 between outer catheter tubing 14 and inner catheter tubing 20. Connector arm 24 of Y-connector 12 communicates in conventional manner with generally cylindrical space 22 at the proximal end thereof. Cylindrical space 22 extends along the catheter between catheter tubings 14 and 20, to terminate in communication with the interior of balloon 16. Inner catheter tubing 20, however, extends through balloon 16 as shown in Fig. 1, being sealed to balloon 16 at its distal end 26 in such a manner that the lumen 28 of inner catheter tubing 20 is open at its distal end. Second arm 30 of Y-connector 12 communicates with lumen 28 of inner catheter tubing 20, so that fluid communication is possible throughout the entire length of the catheter from connector arm 30 through the open distal end 26 of inner catheter tube 20, extending through balloon 16.

[0025] The above structure per se is used in commercially available prior art catheter designs.

[0026] In accordance with this invention, catheter 10 comprises a length of flexible plastic tubing which, in turn, comprises an outer plastic layer 32 and an inner plastic layer 34, the plastic materials of the outer and inner layers being made of different materials and preferably being chemically bonded to each other. While that specific plastic tubing is inner catheter tubing 20 in this specific embodiment, it could be used for the outer catheter tubing 14 as well. As an alternative, a bonding plastic layer could be placed both inside and outside of a catheter having a nylon middle layer, for example.

[0027] Outer tubular plastic layer 32 of catheter tube 20 may preferably be selected from the group consisting of nylon, polyurethane, and polyester, with such materials being of greater stiffness than the material of inner tubular plastic layer 34.

[0028] Outer plastic layer 32 may typically comprise about 60 to 90 percent of the overall wall thickness of tube 20, providing a desired amount of stiffness to the tube while tube 20 retains a thin wall.

[0029] The material of inner tubular plastic layer 34 is made of a material which exhibits lower frictional characteristics than the material of outer plastic layer

32, to facilitate the advancement of a guidewire or a separate, smaller catheter, for example, through the catheter of this invention, while at the same time enjoying the benefit of the physical properties provided to the catheter by the presence of and the physical properties of outer tubular layer 32.

[0030] Accordingly, for an angioplasty or angiography catheter, the overall catheter may exhibit a desired level of stiffness while still remaining flexible, due to the combined properties of inner and outer catheter tubes 20, 14. At the same time the frictional characteristics of the walls of lumen 28 may remain low irrespective of the frictional characteristics of layer 32. Furthermore, this may be accomplished without the separate addition of a PTFE sleeve, a coating, or the like in the catheter lumen, which requires a complexity in the manufacturing process. The layers of inner catheter tube 20 can be simply coextruded.

[0031] As previously stated, the material of the inner plastic layer 34 is preferably no more than half the overall thickness of the wall of inner catheter tubing 20, and it may be as low as about 5 or 10 percent of the overall thickness if desired. The material of inner plastic layer 34 is preferably a copolymer of a major amount of a vinylic polymer such as ethylene and a minor amount of an unsaturated carboxylic acid or an anhydride thereof, for example, a polyethylene which contains about 1 to 5 mole percent of maleic anhydride polymer units present in the molecule (on a mole percent basis).

[0032] More specifically, the material of inner plastic layer 34 may be a high density polyethylene, modified for example with the presence of about 1 or 2 mole percent of copolymerized maleic and anhydride units. As previously stated, such modified polyethylene resins are commercially available from the Quantum Chemical Corporation under the trademark Plexar[®], being used conventionally as tie layer resins for the bonding of dissimilar plastics together in coextruded films. However, nonreactive materials may be used for the inner layer 34 when coextrusion provides a physical bond of adequate strength with layer 32. Specific extrusion conditions for the best bonding depend on the product used.

[0033] In this invention, however, such materials as Plexar[®] resins may be used in their own right as the second layer of this invention, to coat a layer of a catheter on the inside thereof to achieve the advantages previously described herein.

[0034] The functional groups which are found on the vinylic polymers used in this invention to promote a chemical bond between the outer and inner plastic layers may include copolymerized units such as an unsaturated carboxylic acid, or an anhydride thereof, or functional groups which are substituents of vinyl-containing molecules, polymerized or co-polymerized to form the vinylic polymer, for example hydroxyl in the case of polyvinyl alcohol, or other pendant reactive groups as may be desired to permit the formation of a chemical bond between two plastic materials.

[0035] The copolymerized, unsaturated carboxylic acid or anhydride thereof thus can serve as a functional group which bonds a vinylic polymer of the inner layer to the plastic of the outer layer. For example, particularly when the first layer is a polyamide such as nylon or another nitrogen-containing polymer such as polyurethane, this can be effectively accomplished. Similarly, such vinylic polymers having acid functional groups may react with hydroxyl-containing polymers of the outer layer, under proper reaction conditions. Such reactions may take place during co-extrusion of the two layers, to form a covalent bond between the outer and inner plastic layers of the catheter tubing as it is formed by the extrusion.

[0036] Preferably, inner plastic layer 34 is about 12.7 to 76.2 μm (about 0.0005 to 0.003 inch) thick while outer plastic layer 32 is about 76.2 to 152.4 μm (about 0.003 to 0.006 inch) thick, preferably giving a total wall thickness for the inner catheter tube 20 of 127 to 203 μm (0.005 to 0.008 inch). The overall diameter of inner catheter tubing 20 is typically about 0.51 to 0.89 mm (about 0.02 to 0.035 inch). Outer catheter tubing 14 has a typical wall thickness of about 76.2 to 127 μm (about 0.003 to 0.005 inch), and a typical diameter of 1.02 to 1.27 mm (0.04 to 0.05 inch), to provide a generally cylindrical space 22, although it is understood that inner tubing 20 is unconstrained and will not remain in exactly coaxial relationship with outer catheter tubing 14.

[0037] Inner catheter tubing 20 may be coextruded in generally conventional manner as schematically illustrated in Fig. 3. Extruder dies 36,37 bring cylindrical streams of molten plastic which are to form the outer layer 32 and inner layer 34 into coaxial, physical contact around mandrel 33, to pass through extruder die 35 while molten, to form catheter tubing 20. During this process, the reactive moieties of the plastic formulation which comprises inner layer 34 forms chemical bonds with the plastic of outer layer 32. Specifically, the nylon plastic of outer layer 32 is believed to react by forming amide-like linkages with the maleic anhydride units of the high density, copolymerized polyethylene plastic of layer 34 to form a strong bond between the layers. Then, the manufactured tubing 20 may be assembled in conventional manner to form the catheter of this invention, as disclosed herein.

[0038] High density polyethylene is generally understood by those skilled in the art to comprise a density of at least about 0.94 g/cm³. For purposes of this invention a polyethylene containing reactive groups and being of this density or greater is defined to be "high density polyethylene".

[0039] Referring to Figs. 4 and 5 the embodiment of an intravascular balloon catheter in accordance with this invention is disclosed.

[0040] A catheter which comprises the conventional hub 12a similar to hub 12 is connected to the proximal end of double lumen tubing 40, which may be manufactured by an extrusion process in accordance with US-A-

5,063,018, modified to coextrude the tubing 40 disclosed herein. Tubing 40 comprises an outer layer or body 42, plus an inner layer 44 which may be added by coextrusion, typically in lumen 46, through which the guidewire extends.

[0041] The side arm 24a of hub 12a communicates with the other lumen 48 of tubing 40. The distal end of tubing 40 is sealed to a second length of flexible plastic tubing 50 which may be made of nylon or the like to have sufficient stiffness characteristics. Inner tubular layer 44 may be made of a material similar to inner tubular layer 34 of the previous embodiment for similar purposes. The outer catheter layer 42 may be similar to outer catheter layer 32 of the previous embodiment. Basically the inventive principles described above still hold. The material of layer 42 is relied upon to provide desired stiffness to the catheter. The material of layer 44 provides desired low frictional characteristics to lumen 46, both of these being provided in a single catheter by a coextrusion process.

[0042] Tube 50 connects at its distal end to a catheter balloon 52. Lumen 48 communicates with the interior of balloon 52 through tube 50, communicating at the proximal end of lumen 48 with side arm 24a of the hub.

[0043] An inner catheter tube 54 is sealed to the distal end of lumen 46 and extends proximally through balloon 52 to be also sealed to the balloon at the proximal catheter end 56. Tubing 54 may be similar in structure to tubing 20, having an inner layer and an outer layer analogous to layers 32, 34 to perform the desired functions thereof as described above.

[0044] Thus, an embodiment of a catheter according to the invention is disclosed which may be of a desired stiffness and having a desired sealing compatibility to a catheter balloon 16 or 52, for example. At the same time, a catheter lumen similar to lumen 28 or 46 has a low friction wall made of a different material bonded, and preferably covalently bonded, to the plastic of tube 32 or 42.

[0045] The above has been offered for illustrative purposes only, and is not intended to limit the scope of the invention of this application, which is as defined in the claims below.

45 Claims

1. An intravascular catheter (10) which comprises a coextruded length of flexible plastic tubing (20; 40), said tubing comprising an outer plastic layer (32; 42) and an inner plastic layer (34; 44) defining a catheter lumen (28; 46) having a wall surface, wherein said inner and outer plastic layers (32, 34; 42, 44) are bonded to each other and are made of different materials, the wall surface of the catheter lumen (28; 46) exhibiting a lower friction coefficient than the material of said outer plastic layer (32; 42) and the material of the outer plastic layer (32; 42) having greater stiffness than the material of the

inner plastic layer (34; 44), wherein in at least a portion of said catheter said outer plastic layer (42) defines a second lumen (48) spaced from said inner plastic layer (44).

2. The catheter of Claim 1 in which the inner and outer plastic layers (32, 34; 42, 44) are chemically bonded to each other.

3. The catheter of Claim 2 in which the material of the inner plastic layer (34; 44) comprises a vinylic polymer having functional groups chemically bonded to the material of the outer plastic layer (32; 42).

4. The catheter of Claim 3 in which said vinylic polymer is a polyethylene containing a small amount of copolymerized unsaturated carboxylic acid or anhydride thereof.

5. The catheter of Claim 4 in which the material of said inner plastic layer (34; 44) is a high density polyethylene.

6. The catheter of Claim 5 in which from 1 to 5 mole percent of maleic anhydride polymer units are present in said vinylic polymer.

7. The catheter of Claim 5 in which the material of said outer plastic layer (32; 42) is selected from nylon, polyurethane, and polyester.

8. The catheter of Claim 7 in which said inner plastic layer (34; 44) comprises from 30 to 50 percent of the total wall thickness of said flexible plastic tubing.

9. The catheter of claim 1 in which said inner plastic layer (34; 44) comprises from 5 to 50 percent of the total wall thickness of said flexible plastic tubing.

10. The catheter of Claim 1 in which said coextruded length of flexible plastic tubing (20) is surrounded by an outer length of flexible plastic tubing (14) with a generally cylindrical space (22) between said lengths of flexible plastic tubing (14, 20).

11. The catheter of Claim 1 which comprises a balloon (16; 52).

12. A method which comprises coextruding a length of flexible plastic tubing (20; 40) by bringing a first tubular, molten plastic layer (32; 42) into contact with a second tubular, molten plastic layer (34; 44) of different material to form a unitary, multilayer plastic tubing (20; 40) whereby bonding takes place between said plastic layers during the coextrusion process, wherein in the resulting co-extruded product the material of the inner plastic layer (34; 44) defines a lumen (28; 46) having a wall surface and

exhibits a lower friction coefficient than the material of the outer plastic layer (32; 42) and the material of the outer plastic layer (32; 42) has greater stiffness than the material of the inner plastic layer (34; 44), wherein said tubing (20, 40) is formed to have a second lumen (48) defined by said outer plastic layer (42) and spaced from said inner plastic layer (44) in at least a portion of said tubing (20, 40).

13. The method of Claim 12 in which chemical bonding takes place between said plastic layers (32, 34; 42, 44) during the coextrusion process.

14. The method of Claim 13 in which the plastic material of one of said layers comprises a vinylic copolymer comprising a small amount of copolymerized unsaturated carboxylic acid or anhydride thereof, and the material of the other plastic layer is selected from nylon, polyurethane, and polyester.

15. The method of Claim 14 in which the inner plastic layer (34; 44) comprises said vinylic copolymer.

16. The method of Claim 15 in which said vinylic copolymer comprises a high density polyethylene.

Patentansprüche

1. Intravaskulärer Katheter (10), der eine coextrudierte Länge eines flexiblen Plastikschlauchs (20; 40) aufweist, wobei dieser Schlauch eine äußere Plastikschiicht (32; 42) und eine innere Plastikschiicht (34; 44) aufweist, die das Lumen (28; 46) des Katheters definieren, das eine Wandoberfläche aufweist, wobei diese inneren und äußeren Plastikschiichten (32,34; 42,44) aneinander gebunden sind und aus unterschiedlichen Materialien hergestellt sind, wobei die Wandoberfläche des Katheterlumens (28; 46) einen geringeren Reibungskoeffizienten aufweist als das Material der äußeren Plastikschiicht (32; 42), und das Material der äußeren Plastikschiicht (32; 42) eine größere Steifheit aufweist als das Material der inneren Plastikschiicht (34; 44), wobei mindestens ein Teil der äußeren Plastikschiicht (42) des Katheters ein zweites Lumen (48) definiert, das einen Abstand zu der inneren Plastikschiicht aufweist.

2. Katheter nach Anspruch 1, in dem die inneren und äußeren Plastikschiichten (32,34; 42,44) chemisch aneinander gebunden sind.

3. Katheter nach Anspruch 2, in dem das Material der inneren Plastikschiicht (34; 44) ein Vinylpolymer umfaßt, das funktionelle Gruppen aufweist, die chemisch an das Material der äußeren Plastikschiicht (32; 42) gebunden sind.

4. Katheter nach Anspruch 3, in dem das Vinylpolymer ein Polyethylen ist, das eine geringe Menge einer ungesättigten copolymerisierten Carbonsäure oder eines Anhydrids davon aufweist. 5
5. Katheter nach Anspruch 4, in dem das Material der inneren Plastikschiicht (34; 44) ein hochdichtes Polyethylen ist.
6. Katheter nach Anspruch 5, in dem 1 bis 5 Mol-% Maleinsäureanhydrid-Polymerseinheiten in dem Vinylpolymer vorhanden sind. 10
7. Katheter nach Anspruch 5, in dem das Material der äußeren Plastikschiicht (32; 42) aus Nylon, Polyurethan und Polyester ausgewählt ist. 15
8. Katheter nach Anspruch 7, in dem die innere Plastikschiicht (34; 44) 30 bis 50 Prozent der gesamten Wanddicke des flexiblen Plastikschiichts umfaßt. 20
9. Katheter nach Anspruch 1, in dem die innere Plastikschiicht (34; 44) 5 bis 50 Prozent der gesamten Wanddicke des flexiblen Plastikschiichts umfaßt. 25
10. Katheter nach Anspruch 1, in dem die coextrudierte Länge des flexiblen Plastikschiichts (20) von einer äußeren Länge eines flexiblen Plastikschiichts (14) umgeben ist, wobei ein im allgemeinen zylindrischer Hohlraum (22) zwischen den Einheiten der flexiblen Plastikschiichte besteht (14, 20). 30
11. Katheter nach Anspruch 1, der einen Ballon (16; 52) aufweist. 35
12. Verfahren, welches umfaßt: Coextrudieren einer Länge eines flexiblen Plastikschiichts (20; 40) indem man eine erste schlauchförmige, geschmolzene Plastikschiicht (32; 42) in Kontakt mit einer zweiten schlauchförmigen, geschmolzenen Plastikschiicht (34; 44) aus einem anderen Material bringt, um einen einheitlichen Mehrschicht-Plastikschiicht (20; 40) zu bilden, wobei während des Coextrusions-Vorgangs eine Bindung zwischen den Plastikschiichten stattfindet, wobei in dem daraus resultierenden coextrudierten Produkt das Material der inneren Plastikschiicht (34; 44) ein Lumen (28; 46) definiert, das eine Wandoberfläche aufweist und einen geringeren Reibungskoeffizienten besitzt als das Material der äußeren Plastikschiicht (32; 42), und das Material der äußeren Plastikschiicht (32; 42) eine größere Steifheit aufweist als das Material der inneren Plastikschiicht (34; 44), wobei der Schlauch (20, 40) so geformt wird, daß er in mindestens einem Abschnitt des Schlauchs (20, 40) ein zweites Lumen (48) aufweist, das von der äußeren Plastikschiicht (42) definiert ist und einen Abstand von der inneren

Plastikschiicht (44) aufweist.

13. Verfahren nach Anspruch 12, in dem während des Coextrusions-Vorgangs eine chemische Bindung zwischen den Plastikschiichten (32,34; 42,44) stattfindet.
14. Verfahren nach Anspruch 13, in dem das Plastikmaterial einer dieser Schichten ein Vinylcopolymer umfaßt, das eine geringe Menge einer ungesättigten copolymerisierten Carbonsäure oder eines Anhydrids davon umfaßt, und das Material der anderen Plastikschiicht aus Nylon, Polyurethan und Polyester ausgewählt ist.
15. Verfahren nach Anspruch 14, in dem die innere Plastikschiicht (34; 44) das Vinylcopolymer umfaßt.
16. Verfahren nach Anspruch 15, in dem das Vinylcopolymer ein hochdichtes Polyethylen umfaßt.

Revendications

1. Cathéter intravasculaire (10), qui comprend une longueur coextrudée d'un tube en matière plastique souple (20 ; 40), ledit tube comportant une couche extérieure en matière plastique (32 ; 42) et une couche intérieure en matière plastique (34 ; 44), définissant un passage de cathéter (28 ; 46) ayant une surface formant paroi, dans lequel lesdites couches intérieure et extérieure en matière plastique (32, 34 ; 42, 44) sont liées l'une à l'autre et sont faites en des matières différentes, la surface formant paroi du passage de cathéter (28 ; 46) présentant un coefficient de frottement inférieur à celui de la matière de ladite couche extérieure en matière plastique (32 ; 42), et la matière de la couche extérieure en matière plastique (32 ; 42) ayant une plus grande rigidité que la matière de la couche intérieure en matière plastique (34 ; 44), et dans lequel, dans au moins une partie dudit cathéter, ladite couche extérieure en matière plastique (42) définit un second passage (48), espacé de ladite couche intérieure en matière plastique (44).
2. Cathéter selon la revendication 1, dans lequel les couches intérieure et extérieure en matière plastique (32, 34 ; 42, 44) sont chimiquement liées l'une à l'autre.
3. Cathéter selon la revendication 2, dans lequel la matière de la couche intérieure en matière plastique (34 ; 44) comprend un polymère vinylique comportant des groupes fonctionnels chimiquement liés à la matière de la couche extérieure en matière plastique (32 ; 42).
4. Cathéter selon la revendication 3, dans lequel ledit

polymère vinylique est un polyéthylène contenant une petite quantité d'acide carboxylique non saturé copolymérisé ou d'un anhydride de celui-ci.

5. Cathéter selon la revendication 4, dans lequel la matière de ladite couche intérieure en matière plastique (34 ; 44) est un polyéthylène à haute densité. 5
6. Cathéter selon la revendication 5, dans lequel de 1 à 5 pourcents molaires d'unités de polymères d'anhydride maléique sont présents dans ledit polymère vinylique. 10
7. Cathéter selon la revendication 5, dans lequel la matière de ladite couche extérieure en matière plastique (32 ; 42) est choisie parmi le nylon, le polyuréthane et le polyester. 15
8. Cathéter selon la revendication 7, dans lequel ladite couche intérieure en matière plastique (34 ; 44) représente de 30 à 50 % de l'épaisseur totale de la paroi dudit tube en matière plastique souple. 20
9. Cathéter selon la revendication 1, dans lequel ladite couche intérieure en matière plastique (34 ; 44) représente de 5 à 50 % de l'épaisseur totale de la paroi dudit tube en matière plastique souple. 25
10. Cathéter selon la revendication 1, dans lequel ladite longueur coextrudée de tube en matière plastique souple (20) est entourée par une longueur extérieure de tube en matière plastique souple (14), en laissant un espace (22) globalement cylindrique entre lesdites longueurs de tubes en matière plastique souple (14, 20). 30
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11. Cathéter selon la revendication 1, comprenant un ballon (16 ; 52).
12. Procédé, qui comprend la coextrusion d'une longueur de tube en matière plastique souple (20 ; 40), en mettant en contact une première couche tubulaire en matière plastique fondue (32 ; 42) avec une seconde couche tubulaire en matière plastique fondue (34 ; 44) en une matière différente, afin de constituer un tube multicouche d'une seule pièce en matière plastique (20 ; 40), la liaison se produisant entre lesdites couches en matière plastique au cours de l'opération de coextrusion, tandis que, dans le produit coextrudé résultant, la matière de la couche intérieure en matière plastique (34 ; 44) définit un passage (28 ; 46) ayant une surface formant paroi et présentant un coefficient de frottement inférieur à celui de la matière de la couche extérieure en matière plastique (32 ; 42), et la matière de la couche extérieure en matière plastique (32 ; 42) ayant une plus grande rigidité que la matière de la couche intérieure en matière plasti-

que (34 ; 44), et dans lequel ledit tube (20, 40) est formé de manière à comporter un second passage (48), défini par ladite couche extérieure en matière plastique (42) et espacé de ladite couche intérieure en matière plastique (44), dans au moins une partie dudit tube (20, 40).

13. Procédé selon la revendication 12, dans lequel une liaison chimique se produit entre lesdites couches en matière plastique (32, 34 ; 42, 44) au cours de l'opération de coextrusion.
14. Procédé selon la revendication 13, dans lequel la matière plastique de l'une desdites couches comprend un copolymère vinylique contenant une petite quantité d'acide carboxylique non saturé copolymérisé ou d'un anhydride de celui-ci, tandis que la matière de l'autre couche en matière plastique est choisie parmi le nylon, le polyuréthane et le polyester.
15. Procédé selon la revendication 14, dans lequel la couche intérieure en matière plastique (34 ; 44) comprend ledit copolymère vinylique.
16. Procédé selon la revendication 15, dans lequel ledit copolymère vinylique comprend un polyéthylène à haute densité.

